

Statement of
John D. Pagini, AICP
846 Silver Street
Coventry, CT

Rep. Butler, Sen. Bartolomeo, Rep. Miller, Sen. McKinney, Distinguished Members of the Housing Committee

I am John Pagini. I am a land use planning consultant, currently serving the Town of Bolton as its Director of Community development. I have been a municipal and regional planner for over 38 years. I have also served as the Director of Planning and Community Development for the Town of Enfield for 7 years, served as the Director of the Nantucket Planning & Economic Development Commission, a regional planning agency, for 10 years. As planning consultant, I have also recently provided special and interim planning services to the Towns of Vernon, Canton, Columbia, Haddam, and East Hampton. I want to make it clear that I am speaking only on behalf of myself as a professional planner.

In particular, my experiences in both Bolton and Nantucket are instructive:

In Bolton, the town found that it did not have the housing options necessary for aging Baby Boomers, young workers and their families, our public safety employees, our teachers, and other municipal employees. The Town's 2011 affordability study found that there was an affordability gap of \$20,000 for a family of three with an average median income of \$75,000; that the affordability gap for 6th step teachers was \$64,000; and for starting teachers, \$112,000. Since then, home prices have increased as the economy has begun to turn around, thus increasing the affordability gap even further. Bolton made the conscious choice to pursue mixed use zoning and an incentive housing zone with strict design guidelines in an effort to address these needs.

In Nantucket, we had both an upper-income seasonal population, but especially the need to house both seasonal and year-round workers. Nantucket also made a conscious decision to meet the needs of its residents and its workforce population on the island, by building its own nursing home; by authorizing the development by a non-profit entity of an assisted living and senior housing complex on Town land; by developing housing for teachers on school property, and providing additional housing for town employees. Other Island entities understood the need to provide housing for their essential employees, such as medical personnel. The affordability gap on the Island was so extreme that the Town was having difficulty finding housing affordable for doctors. It sought special legislative approval for a housing covenant for up to 120% of median income, and established a non-profit to administer the program.

Massachusetts also has a statute similar to 8-30g -- called 40B -- that allows developers seeking to create housing for those much-needed residents to override local zoning if the town failed to proactively develop a place for them. As Nantucket was in the early stages of addressing its housing needs, several 40B applicants advanced projects which, like 30g projects, were under minimal control by the Town. As staff requested by the ZBA to help process one of these applications, I first-hand felt the frustration of

processing applications which fell under the radar in term of location, density and design. These experiences heightened the Island's resolve to control its own destiny.

I have been a planner for a long time and have had the privilege of working with many forward-thinking community leaders. But I am not naive. I have also seen some officials and town residents -- because of misinformation, fear, or political calculation -- turn a blind eye to the needs of existing residents or seek to exclude others, including essential employees of the Town who sought to move to town. Rather than planning and acting proactively, they made decisions -- or didn't make them -- in a reactive way that did not serve their towns well. I am proud of the actions of Nantucket and Bolton, which chose to build and preserve their communities by preserving and expanding housing and economic development opportunities.

As odious as 30g is to many of us from a planning perspective, I believe that its very existence has been an important catalyst for towns to seize control of their own destiny by developing and implementing their own housing and economic development strategies for the benefit of their communities. Therefore, I believe 8-30g should remain in place -- and should not be weakened -- because there are many more Connecticut towns which have failed to expand housing options to meet today's demographic, economic and lifestyle needs.

I thank you for this opportunity to comment on this important issue.